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## New Mexico's Rail Runner Express

At a press conference in March of this year, Governor Bill Richardson formally unveiled the New Mexico Rail Runner Express name and branding scheme for New Mexico's new commuter rail service. The name and colors were inspired by the State of New Mexico and its history: the roadrunner symbol and the red and yellow colors of the state flag and the Santa Fe Superchief.

Rail Runner service between Bernalillo and Belen is still scheduled to begin in the fall of 2005. Construction of both the passenger cars and the locomotives is progressing. Ten passenger cars are currently in production at Bombardier Transport's® Thunder Bay, Canada production facility. Several of the lead cars are almost completed and will be shipped to New Mexico in the middle of August.

The locomotives are being constructed by Motive Power Inc.®, of Boise, Idaho. A total of five locomotives has been ordered and will be delivered to New Mexico in September and October.

The design and construction of station sites continues at a very aggressive pace.

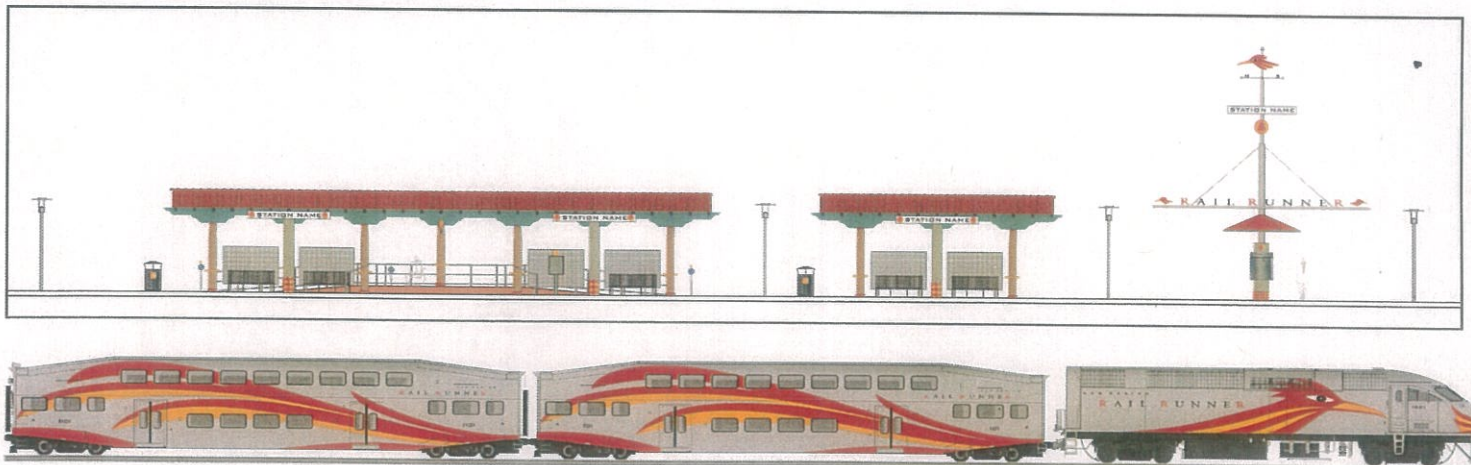
Designs and construction plans for seven of the eight stations are complete and a bid will be released soon for construction, which is anticipated to begin in late July. Station platforms will look similar to the one shown below.

MRCOG and the New Mexico Department of Transportation are working to finalize agreements with Burlington Northern and Santa Fe and evaluating fare structures, transit connections and the final service design.

Work also continues on the Albuquerque to Santa Fe Alternatives Analysis, which may result in a recommendation to extend commuter rail service from the Town of Bernalillo to Santa Fe. The NMDOT and MRCOG have been evaluating new, or upgraded rail alignments to serve Santa Fe. This work will be completed by September of this year, with additional environmental and design studies to follow.

For more information, please see MRCOG's web site at [www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov).

*On left: Rail Runner Passenger cars under construction at the Bombardier® plant in Canada. Below: Illustrations of Rail Runner passenger cars, locomotive, and station platform.*





## MRCOG's *VIEWS*

is published quarterly by the

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**Executive Director**  
Lawrence Rael

## Economic Development News...

### Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico

MRCOG is the administrative and fiscal entity for the Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico (WCCNM), which serves the counties of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia and Torrance. WCCNM strives to accomplish the goals set forth in the Workforce Investment Act, including increasing employment opportunities in formerly underserved areas of the region, and improving the workforce's occupational skills so that self-sufficiency may take the place of welfare dependency.

As the fourth quarter of program-year 2004 is drawing to a close, WCCNM is proud to report an increased number of enrollments in Occupational Skills training, and the generation of Customized Training and On the Job Training (OJT) contracts. OJT contracts enable businesses to hire workforce participants by providing training opportunities. In return, businesses receive financial support from the WCCNM, as well as employees with skills tailored to meet their needs.

WCCNM has contracted with the Economic Development departments in each of the four counties in an effort to assess business needs. This effort will connect employers and their needs to the services offered by the One-Stop Centers.

The Summer Work Academy program, managed by WCCNM for a second year,

is administered by local municipal agencies. This program provides low income, at risk teens (14 to 21 years of age) with work readiness skills and summer employment opportunities.

WCCNM's Out of School Youth program is providing participants the opportunity to earn a GED and to learn about civic and community-based services.

For more information about WCCNM, please see the WCCNM pages of the MRCOG website at [www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov), or contact Adrienne R. Smith, WIA Administrator, at 247-1750, or by email at [asmith@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:asmith@mrcog-nm.gov).

Prospective participants can access services at any of the following WCCNM One-Stop locations:

- Bernalillo County: 501 Mountain Road, NE, Albuquerque, (505) 823-6601
- Sandoval County: 2418 Southern Boulevard, Suite E, Rio Rancho, (505) 994-1900
- Torrance County: Moriarty Chamber of Commerce, 777 Old US Route 66, Moriarty, (505) 832-6774
- Valencia County: UNM Valencia Campus, 280 La Entrada, Los Lunas, (505) 925-8956

### Region Receives \$1.25 Million from EDA

Lawrence Rael and MRCOG staff were on hand to witness U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez deliver \$1.25 million to local economic development initiatives.

During his April visit, the Secretary awarded the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute \$1,000,000 to upgrade its research facility so that it can become more competitive in the pharmaceutical and biomedical arenas. The Hispano Chamber of Commerce was awarded \$250,000 to support its web-based *eMercadoNM* program. That program assists New Mexico businesses and therefore New Mexico's economy by connecting large procurement departments with local suppliers.

The awards were grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). MRCOG staff assisted both entities with their grant applications. For information on applying for an EDA grant, please contact Ann Simon at (505) 724-3617 or by email at [asimon@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:asimon@mrcog-nm.gov).



MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael (center) and Dr. Robert Rubin (at right) and Edmundo Gonzales (at left) from the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute hold the \$1 million EDA check.





*MRCOG's Annual Event  
and Awards Dinner  
has been scheduled for  
August 12, 2005.*

*Contact Wendy Vigil  
at 247-1750  
for more information.*

## MRCOG Joins Kirtland Partnership Committee

On June 1, MRCOG hosted the membership of the Kirtland Partnership Committee (KPC) at a meeting to discuss the future of Kirtland Air Force Base in the most recent round of proposed military base closures.

At the meeting, KPC members voted to accept MRCOG as a member of the organization and invited MRCOG Board Chairman, M. Steve Anaya, and Executive Director, Lawrence Rael, to join the KPC Board of Directors.

MRCOG recognizes the significant role Kirtland Air Force Base plays in the economy of this region. As a major regional employer similar to Intel and UNM, Kirt-



*The H/MC-130P Combat Shadow  
Photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force*

land draws employees from across central New Mexico. The base employs more than 19,000 civilians as well as approximately 5,000 active duty military and 1,000 National Guard and reservists. The estimated economic impact of Kirtland's presence in this region is \$4 billion annually, with payroll and expenditures totaling nearly \$2.5 billion in 2004. In addition, technology transfer opportunities serve to drive the entrepreneurial and small business sectors of New Mexico's economy.

Kirtland Air Force Base is not being considered for closure this year. However, New Mexico's Senior US Senator Pete Domenici warned members of KPC to remain vigilant to ensure that the base will continue to carry out its national security missions at its current location.

As a member of the KPC, MRCOG joins local elected officials, community leaders, and this region's business leaders in efforts to support the vital role played by Kirtland AFB in this community and in national security as a whole. ■

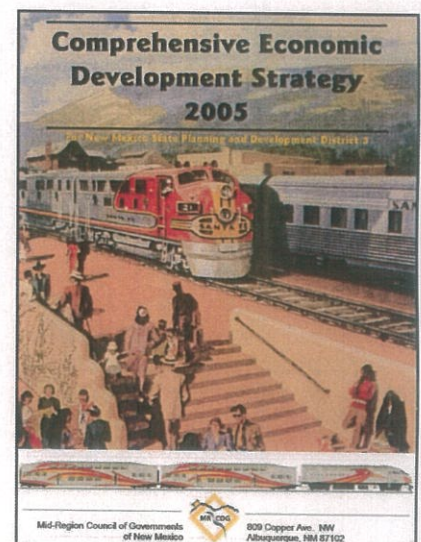
## Five-Year Economic Development Strategy Completed

The MRCOG Board approved the regional five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) at its April meeting. The plan presents an overview of the region's current economic conditions as well as the path to economic development for the next five years. The primary purpose of the plan is to encourage regional cooperation.

Based on widespread input from the community, economic development specialists, and elected officials, seven focus areas were identified as crucial to helping improve the local economy, increasing quality of life, and attracting and retaining high quality jobs. The focus areas build on past goals and synthesize economic development efforts that already have momentum. The 2005 economic development focus areas are:

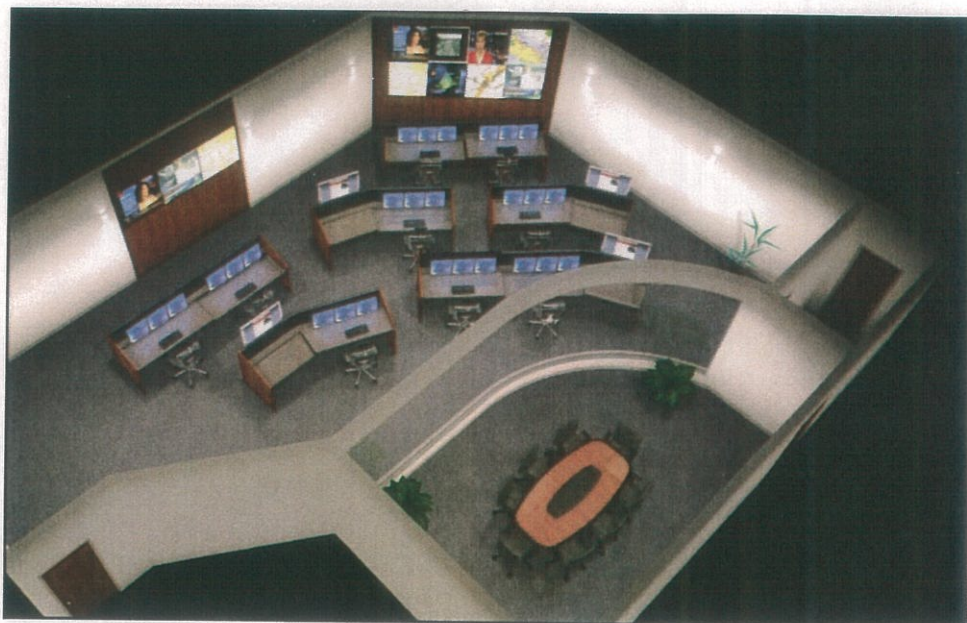
1. Agriculture and Environment (Alternative Energy)
2. Aviation and Space Exploration
3. Entrepreneurship and Access to Capital
4. Film and Artisan Manufacturing
5. Infrastructure and Multimodal Transportation Improvements
6. Technology and Biosciences
7. Workforce and Education Investments

For more information on the CEDS or to obtain a copy of the report, please contact Ann Simon, Economic Development Planner, at (505) 724-3617, or by email at [asimon@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:asimon@mrcog-nm.gov).



*CEDS is available  
on-line at  
[www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov)*





*An Intelligent Transportation Center (ITC), like the conceptual one shown to the left, is to be established in the basement of the new MRCOG offices in Downtown Albuquerque.*

*The ITC will allow for traffic-related data to be collected and analyzed in a central location. In addition, the Center will permit this information to be distributed to roadway users in a more efficient and timely manner so that traffic flows will be smoother and congestion a less frequent occurrence.*

## Intelligent Transportation Systems

On June 2, 2005 Governor Bill Richardson announced that the New Mexico Department of Transportation would be pursuing the establishment of an Intelligent Transportation Center (ITC) in the basement of the new MRCOG building in Downtown Albuquerque to provide a central point of coordination for the region's various Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) initiatives. ITS is the use of technology to manage and maximize traffic flow on the roadway network in order to achieve more consistent travel times and less traffic delay.

### The Purpose of an ITC

The purpose of the ITC is to provide a regional center for the collection and evaluation of traffic-related data, and to provide a coordinated regional response to problems like congestion, crashes, poor weather conditions and special events. Ultimately, the center will house traffic experts from various agencies like the Department of Transportation, the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and the City of Rio Rancho.

ITC staff will be able to access information from roadway sensors, cameras, and traffic signals, and will use variable message signs, the internet, and road advisory telephone and radio to inform drivers and

other roadway users of traffic problems and roadway conditions. Center operators will also be able to initiate corrective actions by coordinating with police, ambulance, traffic signal operators, and wrecker services. A portion of the center will be used to track commuter rail trains as well.

### A State-Wide Effort

The ITC is an integral part of a large investment in ITS statewide and within the region. Specifically, the NMDOT is investing \$45 million of Federal Highway Funds in ITS in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area over the next 6 years. These investments will result in the installation of cameras, detectors, weather sensors, and variable message signs on the Inter-

state and key arterial streets in the Albuquerque region. Initial investments will focus on approximately 35 miles of I-25 and I-40.

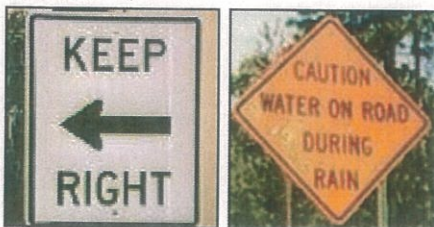
Roadway Sensors and Traffic Cameras are currently being installed on I-25 between Central Avenue and Paseo Del Norte, and will be operational by the end of the year.

Nine Overhead Changeable Message Signs will be constructed in the next 14 months on the Albuquerque Interstates.

The City of Albuquerque is continuing with a project to interconnect traffic signals within the city limits to allow for improved signal coordination and the capability to change signal timings from the ITC. The City is also evaluating ways to improve accident clearance times on the interstate system and on several key arterials.

For more information about ITS in general and the ITC in particular, feel free to contact Chris Blewett, Director of Transportation and Planning Services, at 724-3634, or by email at [cblewett@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:cblewett@mrcog-nm.gov).

*These signs are obviously not examples of ITS...*







### Make Way for the 2030 MTP

The Albuquerque Metropolitan Area is growing fast. More and more people are moving into the area, more and more houses are being built, and more and more cars can be seen out on the streets. When such growth occurs, it is important to plan for the future to make sure that development happens in the way and in the locations where you want it.

MRCOG just started development of the next long-range transportation plan for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area: the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This plan will first analyze what will happen in the next 25 years if current trends continue, and will subsequently propose actions to be implemented in order to relieve congestion, maintain air quality, and improve our quality of life. The long-range plan will subsequently help guide decisions about which transportation projects to fund and implement in the short term.

Public outreach efforts will kick off this summer with small group presentations and open house events. They will focus on informing people of the current status of our transportation system, identifying challenges to our quality of life, and refining the draft goals and objectives that were developed for the 2030 MTP last Fall. Everyone is encouraged to attend: we want to know what you think!

And it is not like it's not important: our current long-range plan, the 2025 MTP, set the priorities for over \$3.4 *billion* in projects and programs! This next MTP will likely see that amount rise even higher.

The 2030 MTP will be completed in the Fall of 2006. Until that time, MRCOG will do its utmost to inform all interested parties of the planning process' progress and to solicit as much public input as possible. Check [www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov) for more information.

For questions, comments, or just to say hello, please feel free to contact Mark Sprick, Transportation Planning Services Manager, at (505) 724-3633, or by email at [msprick@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:msprick@mrcog-nm.gov).

### Valencia County's Mobility Plan Moves Ahead

Work is continuing on the Valencia County Mobility Plan. This long-range transportation plan will look at all transportation issues in Valencia County, including the bicycle, pedestrian, auto, and transit modes of travel. The final version of the Plan will include a list of current and future needs as well as a discussion of the County's financial resources.

A draft transit proposal has been developed and a number of potential roadway alternatives are currently being analyzed. Staff is also working with local groups to identify a set of on and off-road facilities for bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian uses.

Staff has provided presentations to groups throughout the County as well as local governments. MRCOG will be providing additional information about the Plan at public events around the County this summer, including the Valencia County Chamber of Commerce Annual Summerfest and the Belen Music Fest. Look for our booth!

If you know of a group that would be interested in a presentation about the Mobility Plan, or if you have questions, please contact Loretta Tollefson, Special Projects Manager, at 724-3611 or by email at [ltollefson@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:ltollefson@mrcog-nm.gov).

### We Have a Regional Transit District!

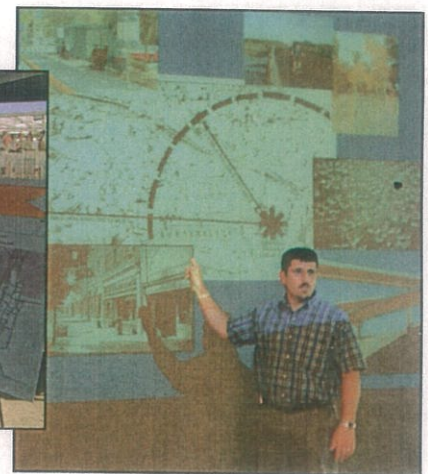
During its March 29 meeting in Las Cruces, the New Mexico Transportation Commission certified the formation of the Mid-Region Transit District.

A regional transit district is a political subdivision of a state that is authorized to provide public transportation services. The types of services provided and the geographical area covered is determined by an RTD's member governments.

Charter members of the Mid-Region Transit District are the counties of Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia; the cities of Belen, Rio Rancho, and Albuquerque; the town of Bernalillo; and the villages of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, Bosque Farms, and Los Lunas.

The organizational phase of the Mid-Region Transit District is now underway. During the coming months, member governments will be determining who will represent them at the RTD Board of Directors. The service and financial planning efforts will begin this Fall.

For more information, please feel free to contact Bruce Rizzieri, Regional Transit Manager, at 724-3618 or by email at [brizzieri@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:brizzieri@mrcog-nm.gov).



*MRCOG staff does its utmost to keep citizens informed of all ongoing planning activities by giving presentations to interested parties and providing information at community events.*





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## MRCOG Launches Agribusiness Website

MRCOG's Agribusiness website is up and running. The website was officially launched on May 11 at the most recent Agribusiness Task Force Meeting. The website can be accessed by going to the MRCOG website ([www.mrcog-nm.gov](http://www.mrcog-nm.gov)) or to [www.agbz.net](http://www.agbz.net) and then clicking on Agribusiness Home Page.

The website describes the purpose of the Agribusiness Task Force, lists upcoming events, and explores important agriculture-related topics (such as markets, producers, water, the economy, and the preservation of agricultural land). It is designed to increase public awareness of agriculture in the Mid-Region Council of Governments' region, provide relevant agricultural data, and act as a forum for producers and consumers.

The Agribusiness Task Force consists of local producers, representatives from government agencies, agricultural organizations, retail operations and manufacturing companies, scientists from Sandia Labs and the University of New Mexico, community activists, economic development specialists, and concerned citizens. The Task Force meets the second Wednesday of every month. Come join us! We're harvesting new ideas!

For more information, please feel free to contact Randall Falkner, Regional Planner, at (505) 724-3623, or by email at [rfalkner@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:rfalkner@mrcog-nm.gov).



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Summer 2005, Volume 3, Issue 1

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Mid-Region Council of Governments